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The Stammerers' Guide.

BY

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“What else our inmost souls can reach
Like that Divinest Gift of speech ? ”

Sir Lewis Morris.

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I.—The Discovery.

“Causa latet ; vis est notissima.”—OVID.

ONLY a stammerer can enter thoroughly into the feelings of a stammerer, and only one who has mastered his own infirmity can be considered competent to lead others to overcome theirs.

I was a particularly bad stammerer for 26 years, during which time I placed myself under the three most important specialists in Germany. Each of these gentlemen relieved me for a time, but none of them were successful in removing that feeling of apprehension which every stammerer knows so well when he has to speak under certain conditions. The result was that I gradually relapsed after a few weeks in each case until my last state was worse than my first.

After these experiences I was chary about placing myself under anyone else, but, in my earnestness to rid myself of my infirmity, I communicated with all the best-known specialists in England, America, and on the Continent. From the particulars I received from these gentlemen, I observed that they all aimed at one thing, viz., teaching the pupil *how to speak*. Now my reason told me I had no need to learn how to speak, for when alone or in unison with others I could always speak perfectly. I had therefore only

to learn to acquire the power to subdue that which prevented my speaking as I well knew how to; in other words that which *caused* me to stammer.

II.—The Treatment.

“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”—PROV. XXIII., v. 7.

What this treatment is, I can scarcely be expected to publish here, but I can nevertheless indicate roughly the directions in which I work.

The great fault the stammerer commits is to watch the words he has to speak or is speaking. No ordinary speaker does this. If he did he would become a stammerer. The result of this watching, is excitement and apprehension, eventually leading to the dominant mental suggestion: “I can’t speak.” My treatment trains the thoughts into the right direction for normal speaking, that is to say away from watching the words and letters, and at the same time cures the overwrought speech nerves. Under this treatment the wrong suggestion gradually vanishes, its removal being hastened by the application of intelligent counter-suggestion. The result is that a permanent cure is so *certain* that I can guarantee it without fear of pecuniary loss.

However great the difference between various cases of stammering, the ultimate cure is always the same and there is no case so severe that a cure cannot be obtained with absolute certainty.

At present there are only two Institutes in the world which treat stammering on the lines I have indicated. One is at Breslau, in Germany, conducted by my friend

Mr. HAUSDÖRFER, and has a most successful record, 1030 patients having been satisfactorily treated up to April, 1907; the other—started by myself in September, 1906, at “Kotree,” Manchester—will, I confidently anticipate, in time fully equal the results obtained at the sister Institute in Germany.

III.—Mental v. Mechanical Treatment.

“It becomes extremely hard to disentangle our idea from the effect by which we know it.”—BURKE.

In order to show clearly that articulatory or breathing exercises are not only useless for curing stammering, but even detrimental, I will make a comparison.

There is a mental ailment called agoraphobia, the victim of which is apt to become very nervous about crossing a street where there is much traffic. He may perhaps cross ten streets without any anxiety and then come to a street leading into a big square which he will have to cross. All along this street he thinks anxiously about crossing the square and works himself up into a great state of excitement, with the result that when he reaches the square he finds it impossible for him to take a step.

It is so with the stammerer, the person to whom he has to speak playing the part of the big square. On the way, the stammerer says what he has to say either mentally or actually with perfect freedom, but the nearer he approaches the more excited he gets, the degree of excitement depending greatly on the character or station of the person he has to speak to. At last he stands before the person only to find his organs of speech as it were paralysed.

Now, just as the victim of agoraphobia knows he can walk when away from traffic so the stammerer knows how to speak when alone. In curing either case the patient must not be taught that which he already knows, but that which he does not know. In the former case it would be absurd for the doctor to tell the patient to practise walking exercises and it is equally absurd to instruct the stammerer to practise speaking exercises. Unfortunately the stammerer seldom realizes that he is able to speak. On the contrary his relations and friends and even the doctor tell him he cannot speak and what is worse, he comes to believe this himself, whereas he should know that he *can* speak alright by himself, sometimes with friends, and always when singing. Notwithstanding this the specialists set him to learn how to speak, and when they get temporary good results put it down to their mechanical exercises, not realizing that the slight relief afforded is due to the suggestions imparted by their own personal influence. So long as it is sought to deal with the pathological effects of stammering in this way, so long will it be impossible to dig out the root of the suffering. What is wanted is not to teach the stammerer that which he knows, viz., *how to speak*, but to instruct him how to acquire permanently the mental and physical state which he is in temporarily when able to speak freely.

IV. How you became a Stammerer.

*“There is occasions and causes why and wherefore
in all things.”—SHAKESPEARE.*

How is it that we ever joined the ranks of the stammerers—those unlucky mortals who spend their lives in making themselves ridiculous? What is the cause of

this most fatal suffering? In opening up this question I am forcibly reminded of all the suffering I have endured and all the bitterness I have experienced. How I raged against humanity which could remain indifferent to such suffering! And how I blamed the medical profession particularly for never being able to extinguish the insignificant weak spark that is the original cause of our starting to stammer!

What this cause is I will endeavour to indicate as well as possible within the space of this little booklet by stating an imaginary dialogue between myself, A, and the mother of a child stammerer, M:—

A.—“Had your son a severe illness or any shock or fright, or is stammering hereditary in your family”?

M.—“He fell from a ladder once and since then he cannot get certain letters out.”

A.—“Which letters”?

M.—“Well, a, e, and i, but the child also sticks at p, s, and t.”

A.—“And what have you done to get rid of the affliction”?

M.—“I went to a doctor, then to an “academy,” and finally to Professor B. I have also done my best to help him myself, but the evil becomes always greater.”

A.—“The boy had, of course, to do vocal and articulatory exercises, which I suppose did no good in the end.”

M.—“No, I am sorry to say that after temporary relief he became worse again. He gets more anxious. Letters that he could formerly speak perfectly well now cause him to stick.”

A—"Yes, of course, that must be so, for the people who have tried to cure him have not only failed to do so, but have even developed his stammering more."

M.—"How is that"?

A.—"That I will explain at once. As a result of the shock of his accident (in other cases illness or heredity work the same) a temporary nervous weakness is brought about. The consequence is that a few natural stumbles in speech which a healthy child would not notice are brooded upon. This leads to anxiety, and the anxiety to further excitement, until the wrong suggestion is finally acquired habitually. Then fear of ridicule and incessant worry disturb the nerves more and more until the having to say certain things under certain conditions works on the already overwrought nerves so much that the organs of speech become paralysed. In this perfectly natural way is stammering developed, and in an equally natural way it can and must be cured. When this is realized it is easy to understand how such artificial means as hypnotism are doomed to absolute failure."

V.—The Question of Relapse.

*"Nichts führt zum Guten,
Das nicht natürlich ist."*—SHILLER.

The reason why the pupils of other specialists and the patients at other institutions have hitherto in most cases experienced a relapse is, after what I have already said, easy to explain. The so-called "successes" have been attained owing to the pupil being surrounded by fellow-sufferers and sympathisers before whom he had no fear of making himself

ridiculous, and owing to the thoughts being diverted away from the suffering to the "patent" method practised. Unfortunately when leaving the specialist or institute they are provided in their exercises and in the advice "not to allow themselves to stammer" with the very best recipes for a relapse as soon as the novelty shall have worn off.

My task—and in severe cases a hard task it is—is to break the sufferer from his entirely wrong train of thought. As soon as this is attained, complete cure ensues and a relapse is impossible because the cause of the evil is for ever removed. A patient of mine, once thoroughly cured, is no more likely to have a relapse than a normal adult speaker to become a stammerer.

VI.—Other Institutions.

"They wholly mistake the nature of criticism who think its business is principally to find fault."—DRYDEN.

There are institutions for the removal of impediments of speech enough in Great Britain, and a great many stammerers have already gone to one or more of them, and made every possible effort to obtain a cure. But what has been the effect? Instead of obtaining relief the evil has often been made much worse, and greater hopelessness and despair has taken place. In most cases a favourable change may have set in, perhaps even a *seeming* relief may have been gained; but the success, as a rule, does not last much longer than the stammerer's sojourn in one of these establishments, and often gives place to a deeper despondency.

Certainly every one who has already called in assistance or endeavoured to gather exact information about the *real*

successes which are achieved in these institutions, will confirm the opinion that the percentage of those who are effectively cured is excessively small. This fact must be attributed to the stammerer's affliction being a psycho-nervous suffering, which can never be removed by breathing or vocal exercises.

The speech specialists not knowing the real root of stammering, confound the cause with effect, and therefore do not understand how to direct their efforts to the right point. Thus it has come to be the general opinion with many stammerers that their impediment is incurable. I had the same opinion after being treated in three famous establishments without success; but when I had found out the secret of the disorder I commenced battling with my enemy, and in a comparatively short time I achieved complete success.

That there are specialists for the cure of stammering who have good qualities as teachers, is proved by the temporary successes they obtain. But it has not been the *method* which led to these results. They have only been attained by the teacher's good personal influence, *i.e.*, his suggestions. The latter, I am sorry to say, bear influence little longer than the stammerer's stay at the establishment; sometimes 2—4 weeks and, perhaps, now and then for a few months—that is purely depending on the nerves of the sufferer; then, however, relapse is certain to set in, a few isolated cases excepted.

Why so? Because the system only taught them to breathe strongly, form exaggerated positions of the mouth and jaw, draw out the first word and drawl the rest, and so forth. It may be that we are able to carry this out when we are in a quiet state, but when alarmed by anxiety, the

difficult letters standing before our mental vision, these artificial and unnatural methods wholly break down.

Some municipalities have adopted the methods of speech drill of certain professors or "graduates" of stammering. The true value of such a recommendation will be seen when the *modus operandi* is explained. Children are notoriously and naturally much easier to cure of stammering than adults who have been practising wrong habits for many years. The municipalities have in the first place directed their attention solely to children. Cases are selected from the municipal schools and examined by a special committee. They are drilled by the specialist and examined *immediately afterwards*. It is then found that the children have acquired the confidence to read, recite, and converse, according to the particular "rules" practised by the specialist. In only one case was any attention paid by the committee to the question of relapse, and in this case an examination took place after 7 or 8 months, but the specialist was allowed to drill the pupils again every day for 3 weeks in preparation. Such tests are quite unscientific and the facts speak for themselves.



VII.—The English Institute.

THE NORTHERN SPEECH INSTITUTE,

“KOTREE,”

ALEXANDRA PARK, MANCHESTER.

THE HOUSE, is pleasantly situated one minute from the Alexandra Park tram terminus and overlooks the park. Patients from a distance are met at the railway station, if necessary.

LADIES AND CHILDREN.—The requirements of patients of all ages are met and Mrs. APPELT makes special arrangements for the comfort and care of ladies and children.

DURATION OF STAY.—The exact time required for treatment varies in each case, but it may be stated that in general a stay of from 6 to 13 weeks is necessary according to the severity of the case.

GUARANTEE.—The giving of a guarantee is rather an innovation in the cure of stammering. Specialists do not give it because they dare not. Mr. APPELT, however, can and does guarantee the cure, and each patient who attends the Institute is given a legal guarantee in writing.

CONSULTATIONS.—Mr. APPELT gives consultations free of any charge.

REFERENCES, FEES.—Particulars under these two heads will be furnished on application to Mr. APPELT.

VIII.

LETTER from Dr. LUTZENBERGER, PHYSICIAN, PERLESCENT,
GERMANY.

To Mr. O. HAUSDÖRFER,

Principal of the Institute for Stammerers,

BRESLAU.

(Written 4 months after being cured.)

[TRANSLATION.]

DEAR Mr. HAUSDÖRFER,

According to your wish, I have great pleasure in giving you my criticisms of your treatment, and this I do the more gladly inasmuch as I may be able to contribute, if only slightly, to convincing my fellow-sufferers of the possibility of a certain cure and to planting courage in the hearts of the hopeless.

I consider that I am competent to make such criticisms for several reasons:—

(1) Being a physician and a former stammerer, who knows exactly a stammerer's feelings and thoughts, which to one who has not stammered must always be and remain incomprehensible.

(2) Having visited several institutions and gone through many courses either without the least success or receiving only temporary relief.

(3) Having worked through nearly the whole of the literature of the subject.

I am thoroughly convinced that your treatment is the one and only means of directing anew the cure of stammering into a path which it will pursue in spite of all hostility from the clique of so-called specialists, and although the way has been shown by a layman, the track will eventually be followed by the medical profession, who will be convinced by the results obtained. I do not mind stating that we physicians have hitherto been and are still helpless in cases of stammering, although the specialists will not admit it. Neither do we agree as to the nature of the affliction.

Before me lies a Report on Stammering of the Hamburg Medical Association. Each of the contributors to the discussion gives a different explanation of the nature of the suffering and a different method of curing it. Only on one point do they agree, viz., that the hitherto available statistics do not prove anything as to the percentage of cures, being taken too soon after the alleged cure, and giving an altogether false impression of the question of relapse. If special statistics could be taken only of severe cases of from 10 years upwards, how exceedingly sad would be the result!

You teach the exact opposite of what has been taught hitherto. With you everything is new and original. Your instructions do not owe anything to any one of the existing methods. There may be in them points of accordance with the old methods, but the teachers of the latter found that their stereotyped methods failed with older, severer, or more reflecting cases, and they worked altogether in the dark. Attention to the nerves was with them a secondary point, speaking exercises being the chief point.

Now, many cures, grateful testimonials, etc., are put before us. What these are worth we know only too well. I have written such grateful testimonials myself and six weeks after have stammered more than ever.

What makes your work alone so unique? It is that you are the first and only one to be successful in finding out the only natural cure, in pointing out the place to which the lever must be applied in order to gain the end with absolute certainty.

Your teaching seems so simple, yet no one has hit upon it before, and you yourself must have spent half a generation in finding it out. I endorse your treatment fully. I wish both for you and for my fellow-sufferers that your treatment may become universally recognised, and that you may be honoured as its discoverer by the whole community of stammerers.

Yours gratefully,

Dr. LUTZENBERGER,

PERLESCENT,

Physician.

27th February, 1905.

